

49ERS REPORT

Easy In The Big Easy Niners Whip Saints With Second-Half Dominance

Poster Shot
Lee Woodall

... Page 11

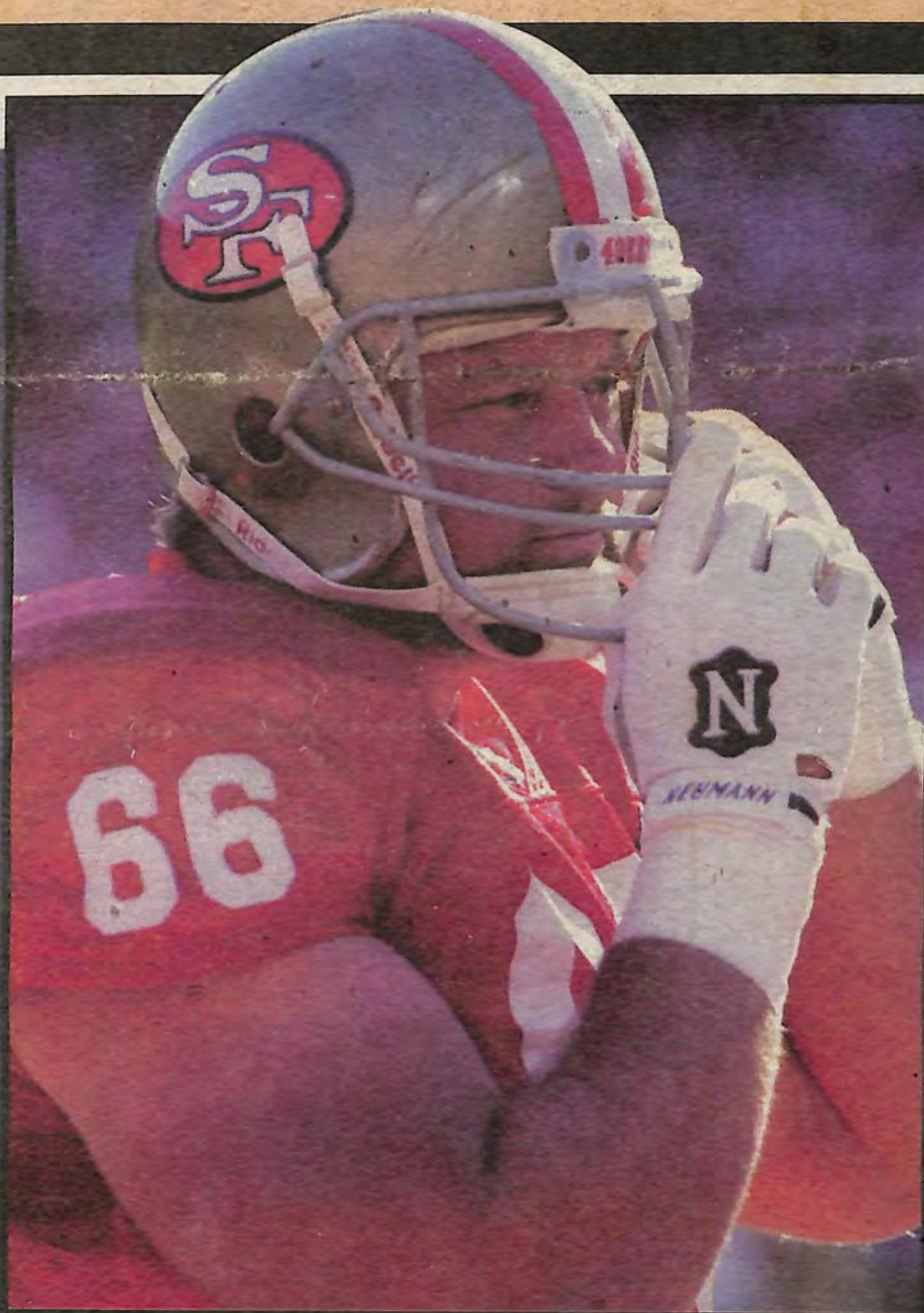
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FROM THE EDITOR

KEVIN
LYNCH

Possibly the best thing about the 49ers' throwback uniforms is the headwear. No, we're not talking about the helmets. We mean the caps.

Well, just one cap, actually — the salary cap. What was supposed to be a bust for the 49ers has become a boon.

The club's brilliant manipulation of the salary cap has indeed thrown the Niners back to the past. Not all the way to 1955, from where the uniforms they currently wear came. No, the cap steered the Niners' time warp to come to a screeching halt at 1990.

THAT'S WHEN THE team was driving to "three-peat," as the television types like to say. Owner Eddie DeBartolo Jr. lavished millions in salary packages on older veterans who were hoping this year to play in a Super Bowl before they retired.

It has been just like 1990. Former All-Pros like Hanford Dixon, Fred Smerlas, Jim Burt and Matt Millen all came to the 49ers about that time.

The main allure was money. Those were the free-spending days and the 49ers tossed money around with ease and frequency. The push to gobble up free agents almost worked. The 49ers finished with a 14-2 record and came within four seconds of appearing in a third straight Super Bowl. Giants kicker Matt Bahr ended that dream on a field goal that handed the eventual world champions a 15-13 victory in the NFC title game.

This year, the allure is different. The chance to play in a Super Bowl has caused many to flock to the 49ers, despite being able to make thousands more elsewhere. The names Toi Cook and Deion Sanders come to mind. Cook is playing with an incentive-laden package that's currently paying him the league minimum of \$162,000.

HE ISN'T LIKELY to reach his playing-time incentives, because he isn't starting. Still, in the week heading up to the Saints game, Cook said he's happier playing for the 49ers than starting for the Saints. They were dangling a \$500,000 contract in front of him.

It seems that once players like linebacker Ken Norton and defensive end Richard Dent signed, others followed. It

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was as if the 49ers had to prove they were still committed to winning after losing for the second straight time to the Cowboys in the NFC Championship game. They also had to prove they could scale the hurdle of the salary cap, which they've done better than any other team in the league.

ONCE THAT WAS established, other players decided to forego higher salaries and cast their lot with the Niners. It's almost like a college program that lands one blue-chip

high schooler and then other highly touted prospects become interested.

The time warp didn't stop at 1990. The 49ers' secondary certainly reminds many of the 1981 defensive backfield that helped lift the team to its first championship. Eric Wright agrees.

Wright was a rookie then, playing on the other side from another rookie cornerback named Ronnie Lott. Now playing for the Jets, Lott has assured himself a place in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Wright quickly became one of the best coverage corners in the league, with his skills even exceeding those of Lott.

WRIGHT BECAME AN assistant secondary coach with the 49ers upon his retirement in 1991. He moved to his alma mater, the University of Missouri, this year to become their secondary coach. Looking at the Niners from his perch in Columbia, Mo., Wright sees similarities.

"Ronnie pushed me," Wright said. "Deion is pushing guys like E.D. (Eric Davis)."

Lott was snatching headlines in 1981 with his shattering tackles. From the moment he was drafted Lott was the "Da Man." Wright wanted to keep pace and quietly get the job done while everyone raved about Lott.

Wright now sees the same thing with Sanders and Davis. Sanders has a tremendous following, except on game days. It seems that's the only day of the week he's ignored, mainly by opposing quarterbacks.

That means Davis has been a busy man over at left cornerback, and he's played extremely well.

"E.D. is tough," said Wright. "He's going to show up." Wright should know. He's worn Davis' shoes. ☐

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TIM HARRIS SIGNED

The 49ers brought back Tim Harris in an effort to bolster a sagging pass rush. The All-Pro pass rush specialist played for the Niners in 1991-92 and had 17 1/2 sacks in '92.

He signed with the Eagles last year, then suffered an elbow injury four games into the season and never returned. Harris moved back to Northern California this year and opened a restaurant, Larry's Turf and Surf in Capitola, with partner Larry Silva.

"I've been working out every day and running half the restaurant," Harris said on his first day with the 49ers last Wednesday. "I was just going week by week and if they did call, they did. If they didn't, there was no sleep loss over it or anything like that."

HARRIS WILL REPORTEDLY earn \$10,000 a game and another \$5,000 for each sack. He isn't expected to start but will be used in pass-rush situations. He'll line up on the side opposite from Rickey Jackson when he does play.

Harris was worked out by the 49ers 3 1/2 weeks ago and wasn't

impressive.

"I didn't do so well," Harris said. "But they gave me enough time to get into better shape and I passed the test."

THE 49ERS HAD only 24 sacks after 11 games, tied for lowest through 11 games since the club started keeping track of sacks in 1981. The total is slightly better than the league average.

The 49ers have had most of their pass rush up the middle. Defensive tackles Dana Stubblefield and Bryant Young accounted for 13 of the team's sacks. Harris hopes the inside guys will flush quarterbacks right into his arms.

Arms have been a problem for Harris lately, particularly the right one, which has been operated on four times.

"It (the elbow) is still weak in a couple of places," Harris said. "But I've been working on that a lot lately, too, so it's getting better. It's about 95 percent right now."

The 49ers released guard Brian Bollinger to make room for Harris on the roster.



DE Tim Harris

INJURIES

Defensive end Richard Dent hopes to return sometime in December from the torn right medial collateral ligament injury he suffered early in the season.

DENT ALSO WANTS to come back on a grass field so as not to put undue stress on the knee. He could possibly return on Dec. 11 at San Diego, or in the second-to-last regular-season game, against the Broncos.

Prospects don't look as bright for right

guard Ralph Tamm, who's still contending with his left foot injury. When the pain lessens, Tamm will be able to return. How's that for nebulous?

AFTER DISLOCATING his left shoulder three times this season, defensive end Troy Wilson had damaged the right shoulder. He missed the Rams game and might miss more. He also won't be doing any hand stances any time soon.

Running back Marc Logan has been bothered by a pulled calf muscle. He should be back for the Falcons game.

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ODDS & ENDS

Many Niners took part in a effort to distribute turkeys to the disadvantaged before Thanksgiving... WR Jerry Rice was named NFC Player of the Week for his 16-catch effort in the Rams game... G Derrick Deese, S Merton Hanks and LB Kevin Mitchell received game balls for their efforts in the Nov. 13 defeat of the Cowboys... DT Bryant Young and Rice received game balls for the Rams game.

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COACH'S CORNER

RICE, YOUNG HAVE A SENSE ABOUT THEMGEORGE
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developed it with each ballgame and with each season, too. He's able to take advantage and know where people are more than much more.

Q. HOW CLOSE IS STEVE YOUNG TO OPERATING THIS OFFENSE AS WELL AS IT CAN BE RUN?

A. You don't get too much better. But if Steve Young was sitting here, he would still say, "I've got to get better at this. I've got to do better at that." That's the makeup of these fellows. That's how they look at it.

Q. IS THIS BEST YEAR YOUNG HAS EVER HAD?

A. You get the feeling this is the best since he has been

the starter. You bet.

Q. DOES RICKY WATTERS FIND IT EASIER TO RUN BETWEEN THE TACKLES, AS OPPOSED TO GETTING OUTSIDE?

A. I think so, when Ricky makes up his mind to run aggressively up the field. I think he's a much better running back slashing, as opposed to bobbing and weaving. I think that's the reason he's been running better as of late. He's not doing so much bobbing and weaving. He's slashing more. So far, our best runs have been coming up inside.

Q. IS IT SOMETHING YOU TALK TO HIM ABOUT?

A. Yeah. We did it last year, too, then he kind of gets away from it for a while, and then has to regroup. I think he gets that much more focused into the season. His attitude has been super and his work ethic is great. I think he gets more and more focused as to what he has to do to have a fine season.

Q. IS GUARD DERRICK DEESE PLAYING TO THE STANDARD SET BY THE MAN HE'S REPLACING (RALPH TAMM)?

A. He's done quite well, actually. I think (offensive line coach) Bobb (McKittrick) feels quite good about his play. He got a game ball for game against the Cowboys, which is quite an accomplishment. I'd say it's a competitive situation. If Ralph came back we'd work him into a spot again, but then it would be competitive.

Q. HOW CLOSE IS THE OFFENSIVE LINE TO COMING BACK TO WHAT YOU HAVE COME

TO EXPECT?

A. We are certainly better than we were two weeks ago, but I don't know if you're ever satisfied.

Q. A LOT OF PLAYERS SEEM TO LOSE THEIR FOOTING AT CANDLESTICK PARK. IS THERE ANYTHING YOU CAN DO TO GUARD AGAINST THAT?

A. That's going to happen. We've had some wet-weather practices. It's just something you have to contend with. I don't know if you can really totally prepare yourself for it. You have to be conscious of it, and have on the right footgear, and away you go.

Q. IF YOU HAD TO PLAY RICHARD DENT FOR THE LAST GAME OF THE YEAR, WOULD YOU PLAY HIM ON THE ARTIFICIAL AT MINNESOTA?

A. I would say that would have an affect on our decision. I hope that would have an affect before that. We have two grass games prior to that one, if he's able to come back before (that). I think certainly the outside pass rush is an issue. Rickey (Jackson) is getting a good push, but that part of it is not as consistent as we would like.

Q. WHEN YOU BARELY BEAT A TEAM YOU ARE FAVERED TO BEAT BY A LOT, DO YOU SAY THAT WAS A BAD GAME, OR DO YOU JUST SAY IT WAS A VICTORY AND MOVE ON?

A. You do both. We won the game and let's move on, but at the same time you don't like to take steps back. We've been playing quite aggressively.

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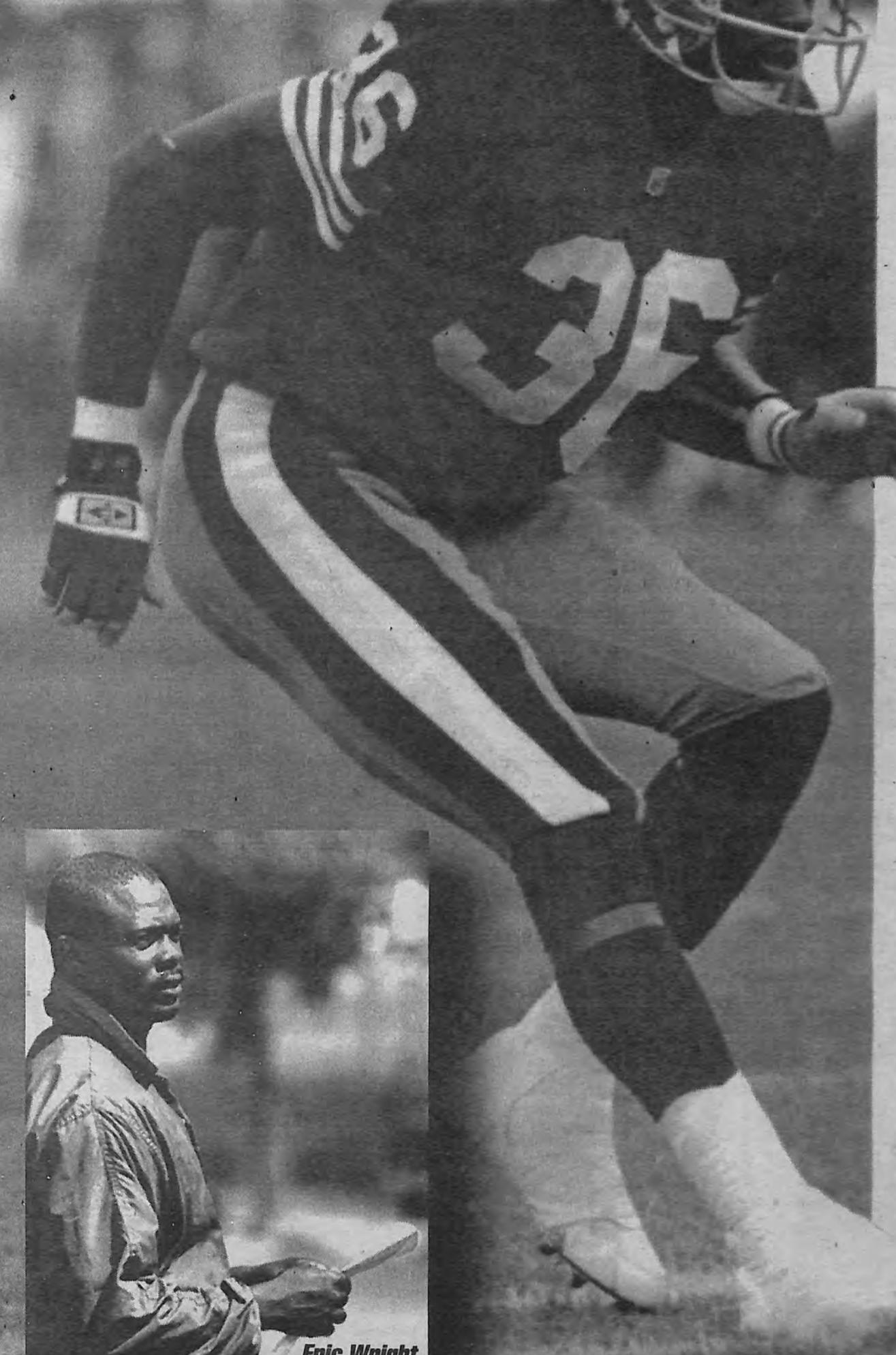
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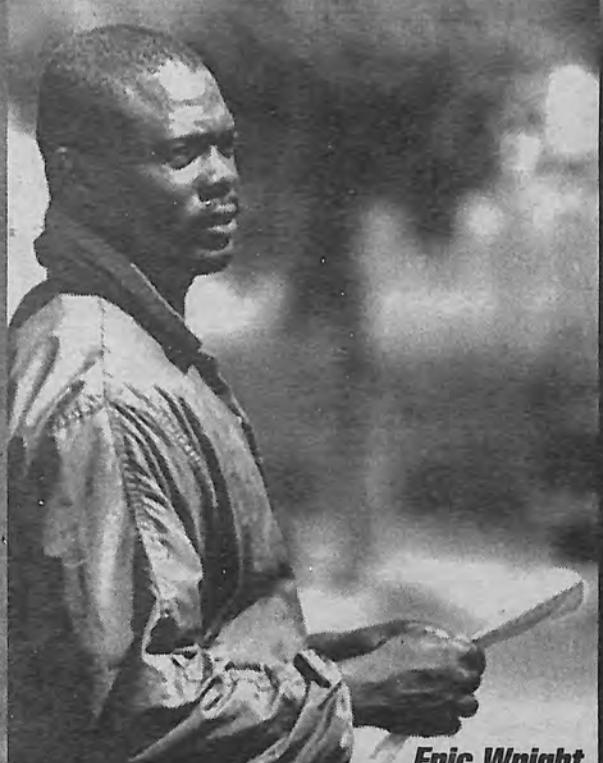
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LIKE TEACHER, LIKE STUDENT



Eric Wright



Merton Hanks

A FORMER STAR SEES HIMSELF IN MERTON HANKS

By Kevin Lynch

If you heard it, you'll never forget it. The sound cut the summer air like machine gun fire.

"Mert-Mert-Mert-Mert-Mert!"

The voice belonged to former assistant secondary coach Eric Wright, and it was aimed at rookie cornerback Merton Hanks.

Wright was on Hanks constantly — teaching, berating, guiding. Hanks was a fifth-round draft choice with chip on his shoulder so large his shoulder pads couldn't cover it.

"I feel I was passed over," Hanks said on the day he was drafted out of Iowa in 1991.

He thought shutting down Big Ten rivals like Andre Rison and Randall Hill was proof enough he was a bona fide NFL prospect. But Hanks ran the 40-yard dash in 4.7 seconds in the college combine. The sluggish time and his small build made his stock plunge.

INSTEAD OF BEING a first- or second-rounder, Hanks would now have to bust his can to overcome the middle-round bias.

"I remember the debate about it," 49ers coach George Seifert said of the haggling in the war room right before they picked Hanks.

"(Former college scouting director) Tony Razzano and (defensive coordinator) Ray Rhodes both liked him. There was concern about his speed and so forth. In all honesty, we thought he could possibly make the club."

When Hanks got to the 49ers he wanted to know what it would take to make the club. He wanted to know what it would take to excel in the NFL. That's when Wright stepped in. He was there every step of the way.

Wright didn't see Hanks the way everyone else saw Hanks. He didn't see Hanks as a skinny, slow cornerback drafted out of a conference known for running the ball. What Wright saw was himself, 12 years earlier — a rookie, raw, untested, but full of desire.

"I knew he was a great athlete and a highly competitive player," Wright said. "I did him the way George did me."

When Wright was a second-round draft choice in 1981, Seifert was the secondary coach.

"George could have easily been a Marine sergeant," Ronnie Lott said in 1989. "There were times when everyone, at least once, thought 'I despise this man.'"

THEIR MAIN CONTENTION was the way Seifert rode Wright. Some in the secondary used to joke about plotting to get Seifert because of his constant harping on one guy.

Running back Roger Craig was drafted in 1983, when Seifert was still tutoring the secondary.

"He was a real perfectionist," Craig recalled. "He rode those guys hard. But that made them professionals. I'd rather have a coach like that than a coach who would let things slide."

Wright responded to Seifert's harsh tactics and grew to be possibly the best coverage cornerback in the NFL before a groin injury limited his speed and eventually ended his career. His best season was 1983, when he led a team with Ronnie Lott, Carlton Williamson and Dwight Hicks in interceptions with seven. He returned two interceptions for touchdowns against the Vikings that year.

Eight years after Wright's brilliant 1983 campaign a new generation of defensive backs replaced those who helped win championships for the 49ers. Wright was no longer a pupil. He was a teacher — a part-time coach with the 49ers' secondary.

Seifert rose from secondary to defensive coordina-

tor, and eventually head coach. Along comes Hanks in '91, a player most saw as a special teamer or maybe a dime back if somebody gets injured.

Wright saw Pro Bowl potential. So every day in practice he lit into Hanks, bellowing at him for every mistake.

"I call it like I see it," Wright said. "If you make a mistake, you own up to it and build on it."

Wright spent three seasons on the 49ers' coaching staff and is now the secondary coach at the University of Missouri. Hanks is on the verge of the Pro Bowl.

WRIGHT VIEWS coaching the same way Seifert viewed it when he was secondary coach.

"You call guys out," he said. "They're getting fat paychecks and they should be able to take a little criticism."

Hanks responded almost immediately. The Niners lost Eric Davis to injury that year and after a parade of candidates was tried at cornerback, Hanks was inserted.

He held the job despite having his hand heavily taped because of a thumb injury. He was elected to the NFL All-Rookie team by College and Pro Football Weekly magazine.

Hanks became the jack of trades in the secondary for a few seasons. He played cornerback, nickel back and safety. He had the smarts and the flexibility to be the 49ers' swingman.

Hanks made plays no matter where he played. Despite not starting in 1992, Hanks led the secondary in tackles. Through it all, he clung to the motto taught to him by defensive coordinator Ray Rhodes.

"You have to try to get something good on film every day," Hanks said. "So the coaching staff looks at you and says, 'There's a guy still improving.'"

BY LAST SEASON Hanks was playing so well the 49ers simply couldn't keep him off the field. He wrestled the starting free safety job away from 1992 first-round choice Dana Hall. The position seemed perfect for Hanks and he proved it in a Monday night game against the Saints, as he made 11 tackles and intercepted two passes, one of which was returned for touchdown.

He was named NFC Defensive Player of the Week as the 49ers went on to thrash the Saints 42-7 in a game crucial for winning the NFC West crown.

Still, Hanks couldn't shed the swingman label. When

right cornerback Don Griffin went to the Browns via free agency, Hanks was penciled in to replace him. Then the Niners signed All-Pro Deion Sanders, and Hanks was back at safety, and proud to be there.

"Just being able to play free safety has been a boon for me," he said, meaning no longer must he spread himself over three positions. "The technique at corner is different from the technique at safety. That's different from the technique at nickel back. You try to fine-tune those things."

HANKS SAID differentiating from all the positions has been his biggest challenge as professional. Concentrating

(which was pre-empted by the firing of Oilers coach Jack Pardee). Writers stuck to his locker for days after the game.

When asked who influenced him the most, Hanks, a Christian, would say Jesus Christ. Asked who was the second-greatest influence, he said Eric Wright. Hanks credits Wright for teaching him the proper mental approach to the game.

"Eric always said to me, 'Everyone can be average,'" Hanks said. "I know Ronnie (Lott) got a lot of attention, but when Eric Wright was playing and he was healthy, he was the best cornerback, without question. He should be in the Hall of Fame. When somebody like that tells you something, you're going to pay attention."

CERTAINLY, THE 49ERS

secondary hasn't been this good since Wright, Lott, Williamson and Hicks were patrolling it in the early 1980s. Wright sees a similar dynamic working now that worked then.

"When I was playing Ronnie Lott pushed me," Wright said.

There's now another brilliant player lighting up the secondary for the Niners — Sanders. Wright believes Sanders is pushing fellow cornerback Eric Davis and Hanks.

Because strong safety Tim McDonald is already playing on a Pro Bowl level, the 49ers better watch out. If they get pushed any harder, they might just become the best secondary in football.



HANKS MADE HIS BID IN COWBOYS GAME

It was the 49ers' biggest regular-season game of the year, possibly the biggest regular-season game in five years. It was Cowboys game, and it was extra special for Merton Hanks.

Hanks grew up in Dallas the youngest of six kids. He stood out on an afternoon full of sparkling performances by many 49ers players. But his performance, (eight tackles, two interceptions) outdid all others.

It didn't seem to be a big deal for Hanks. He just continued a tradition he started in high school — coming up big in big games.

HANKS ONCE HAD 17 tackles and two interceptions in a game for Lake Highlands High School. Coach Jerry Gayton, now Highlands' defensive coordinator, remembers that night.

"He played free safety," said Gayton. "He took the alley on either side."

The opposing team was running the option, and Hanks had the speed to shoot the gap on either side. He was piling up the tackles when the opposition decided to pass.

"They thought they could play-action fake and catch him coming up," Gayton said. "They thought they could throw over the top. That's when he made two interceptions."

After a tremendous career at Iowa, Hanks continued his tradition of making big plays in big games as a professional. He got the nod at free safety in a critical game last year on a Monday nighter against the Saints.

HANKS WAS ALL over the field — 11 tackles, two interceptions, a 67-yard interception return for a touchdown. Behind

Hanks, the 49ers flattened the Saints 42-7 and went on to win the NFC West.

Then came this year's game against the Cowboys. Looking back on it, Hanks doesn't view it as anything special.

"It was a situation where everyone, coaches and players, were going to do everything possible to win," Hanks said. "That (performance) was my expression of that commitment."

EVEN HIS WIFE, Marva, didn't see anything different or special about Merton that night.

"She said I looked like I normally do — just calm."

Hanks continued to play well against the Rams when he had a key breakup of a pass late in the game, which kept the Rams from pulling off a big upset in the final seconds.

Simply getting used to playing free safety is one reason for Hanks' remarkable play of late. Hanks wasn't moved to safety until the third game of the season. He had played cornerback up to that point.

"I DIDN'T HAVE any time there in training camp," Hanks said. "I wasn't focusing on safety."

Hanks didn't make the calls, usually the domain of the free safety, initially. But because he wasn't acquainted with the position, he was leaving that up to strong safety Tim McDonald. In recent weeks, the responsibility has been shared.

"That will free Tim up to do more things," Hanks said.

Undoubtedly, bad things to the Niners' rivals.

—Kevin Lynch

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1994 MEDIA GUIDE



SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS



MIKE SHUMANN

As the Bay Area gets cranked up about the 49ers, another event made me think of the past.

I'm talking about Chris Webber, the young and confused basketball star formerly of the Warriors. It seems Coach Don Nelson was too hard on his rookies,

especially Webber, and Chris claimed Nellie didn't respect him as a human being. So Webber exercised his one-year escape clause and took his act to the Washington Bullets.

WEBBER SAID NELLIE yelled at him way too often last year and he couldn't play for a man who had no respect for his rookies. Tim Hardaway is back this season, so the Warriors were no longer Webber's team, as he thought they were last season.

Mike Ditka, the former head coach of the Bears, said on his television pre-game show that Nelson is his Coach of the Year because he would not let the inmates run the asylum. Hurray.

Webber is a new breed of athlete who comes in with moneybags loaded but priorities askew. Professional athletes used to play for the love of the game and a championship. Now, money and being happy are the keys.

LET'S TAKE A look at the Niners, who seem to be a tad different in the world of spoiled young athletes.

Webber seems to have a problem with discipline, a mainstay at any level of athletics. Here was a kid who was never yelled at by his high school or college coaches and

made both of them look like superstars, too. But when he got to the NBA he, like any other rookie, made mistakes and had to take Nelson's wrath, just as Tim Hardaway and Chris Mullin and Chris Gatling and the rest of the Warriors did when they were rookies. Are any of these players complaining? No.

I GUESS WE should have seen it coming. Webber was the one who cost Michigan a national title two years ago with his lamebrained move to call a time out when his team had none to call. Sometimes talent can cover a lame brain, but the brain will get in the way eventually.

Bill Walsh over the years was careful not to bring in a

WALSH KNEW HOW TO WIN AND DID SO WITH PLAYERS HE THOUGHT COULD TOE THE LINE. GEORGE SEIFERT HAS KEPT THE TREND ALIVE. IT ISN'T THAT PLAYERS AREN'T BOISTEROUS WITH EACH OTHER. THEY JUST AREN'T THAT WAY WITH THE PRESS. IT'S LIKE THEY SPEAK ONLY IN CLICHES. THAT'S LEARNED BEHAVIOR — NINERS BEHAVIOR.

player with a strong personality, as he thought it would disrupt the team chemistry. When Bill got there players like O.J. Simpson, Al Cowlings and Cedric Hardman were veterans who had seen it all. The next year they were all gone, so Walsh could have a tighter grip on the club. He was also a believer, as I am, that a head coach should make a dollar more than his top-paid player. That way he would always be able to tell a youngster that the coach was boss.

I've seen and heard these young superstars tell their

coaches to go jump in the lake, as if a coach making \$500,000 a year can't tell a rookie making millions what to do. Walsh filtered out the stronger personalities for more subdued players. Housecleaning started with Simpson and Hardman and continued with Walt Downing, Dan Bunz, Craig Puki, Mike Shumann (imagine me having something to say), Charlie Young, Steve DeBerg, Charles Haley and Tim Harris.

Walsh knew how to win and did so with players he thought could toe the line. George Seifert has kept the trend alive. It isn't that players aren't boisterous with each other. They just aren't that way with the press. It's like they speak only in cliches. That's learned behavior — Niners behavior.

Even Deion Sanders, the Mouth of the South, tempered his behavior when he joined the 49ers, until he got back to Atlanta. Then he let off steam. But he hasn't piped up since.

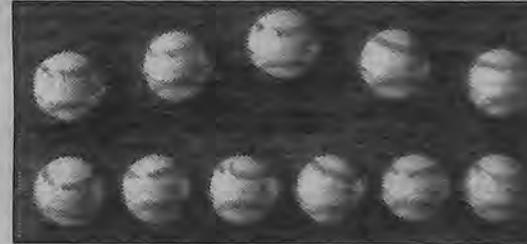
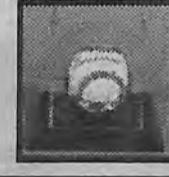
SANDERS IS A modern athlete, but he came to the 49ers acting like an oldtimer, and he came to win a championship. He could have gone to New Orleans, Miami or any place for twice the money, but opted for a shot at a Super Bowl ring. That's why every player of the past played. It wasn't to be happy.

Young athletes could learn from Sanders and Rickey Jackson and Tim McDonald and Charles Mann. Seifert deserves a lot of the credit. He's kept the team focused on one goal. Distractions have been squelched. Even when the team's flagship radio station ran a poll on whether Seifert should be replaced, he handled it with dignity.

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CB Toi Cook Dec. 3 (30)

P Klaus Wilmsmeyer Dec. 4 (27)

DT Rhett Hall Dec. 5 (26)

DE Richard Dent Dec. 13 (34)

OT Steve Wallace Dec. 27 (30)

**Offensive line coach Bobb McKittrick
Dec. 29 (59)**

TRIVIA

Name the three former 49ers who currently work for the team?

Owens, (executive assistant to alumini coordinator), Billy Owens (scout).
Answer: Dwight Clark (coordinator of football operations). R.C.



NO SHAVED HEAD

Wide receiver Jerry Rice thought it might be interesting to start the season with a new look, so he shaved his head.

HIS WIFE, JACKIE, supported his new 'do (or no 'do, whichever you prefer) all the way. But his mother, who watched the game in which Rice became the NFL's all-time touchdowns leader, disagreed. Rice took off his helmet after breaking the record and his mother called the next day from Mississippi to say she didn't like the bald pate.

So Rice grew back his hair. It means, of course, his mother has more influence than his wife in this particular situation. When asked about the mother's influence, Rice said, "It comes first, always. You know that."

THE STATS OF THE OBSCURE

The 49ers have RB Derek Loville, a player who grew up in San Francisco, on the roster. Practice squad players Alfonzo Browning and Jamal Fountaine did, too. The last players on the 49ers from San Francisco -- O.J. Simpson and Al Cowlings in 1978.

**JUST A COACH?
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Defensive line coach Dwaine Board is interested in more than just football. The players come to him if they need help on their Harley Davidson motorcycles. Board can build one from scratch. He's also an accomplished architect.

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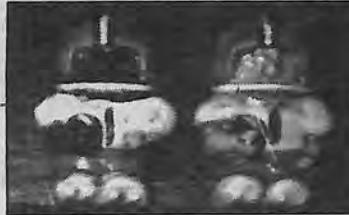
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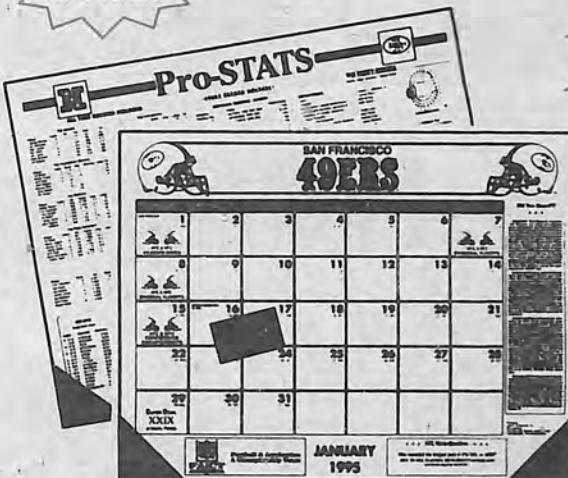
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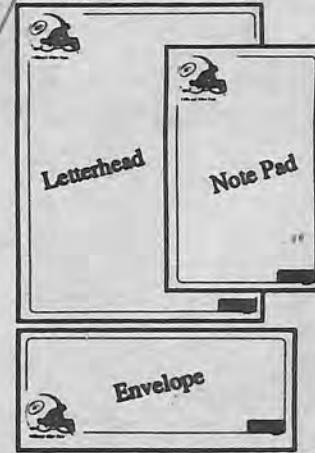


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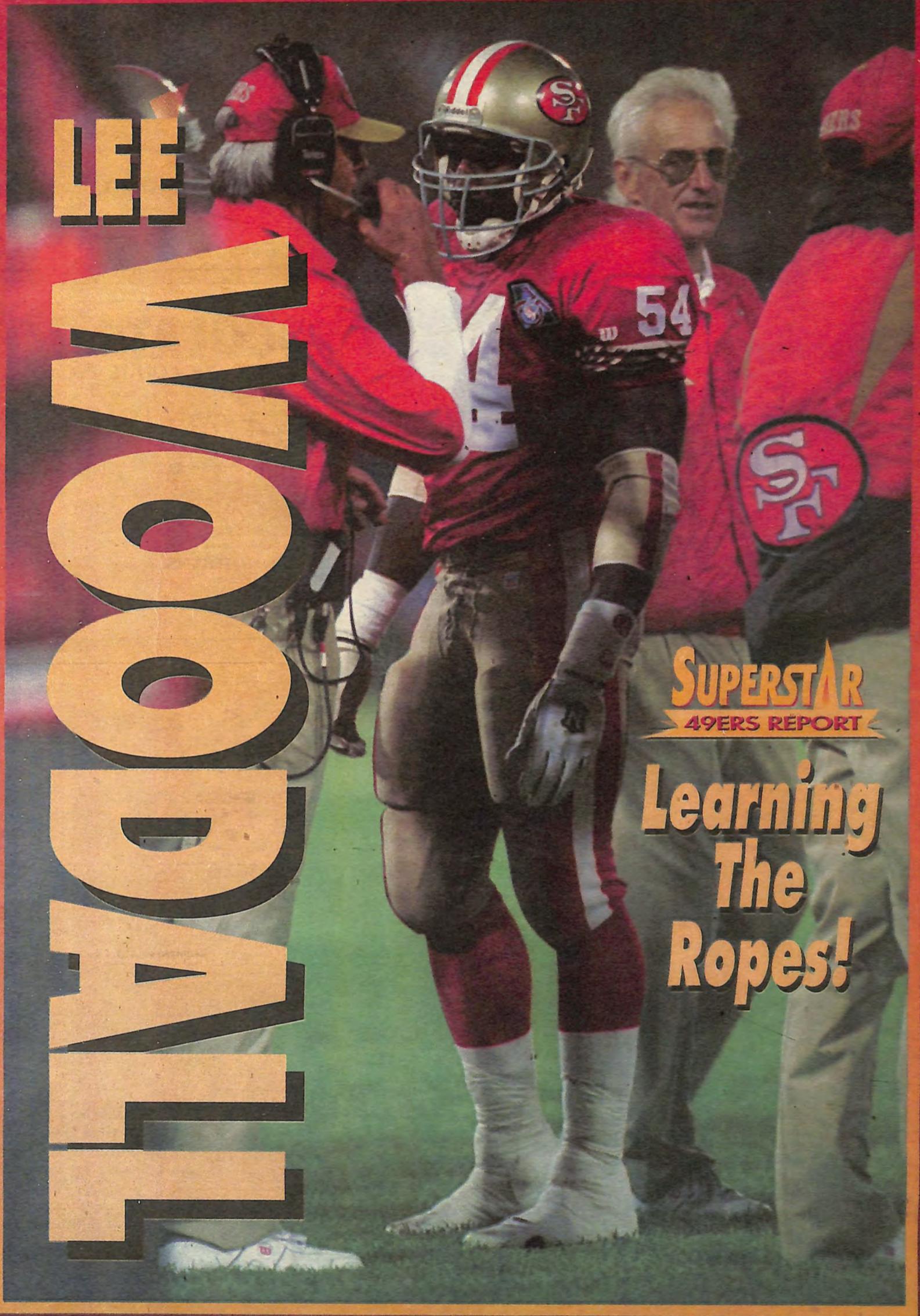
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SAINTS	0	14	0	0	14

49ERS raise record to 10-2 with seventh straight victory

SAINTS fall to 4-8

49ERS clinch NFC West title for 10th time in 12 years

STEVE YOUNG 24-of-30 passing, 281 yards, 4 touchdowns, 0 interceptions

JIM EVERETT 13-of-25 passing, 147 yards, 0 TDs, 2 interceptions

YOUNG completes passes to 8 different receivers

49ERS 191-83 rushing advantage

RICKY WATTERS
105 yards rushing on 26 carries

NATE SINGLETON
longest reception of career

49ERS
hold possession for 20:07 of second half

By Kevin Lynch

NEW ORLEANS — The NFC West crown came marching home with the 49ers on Monday night as their 35-14 victory over the rugged Saints earned them their 11th division championship in the last 14 years. It was the first time the Niners ever sewed up the division in November.

"We're looking past that now," guard Derrick Deese said. "We want more than that. We want to get greedy now."

The Niners were greedy in the second half as they controlled the clock for more than two-thirds of the time in the latter quarters.

But the victory didn't come that easily, despite the lopsided score. Just ask center Bart Oates and quarterback Steve Young.

OATES LEFT THE game at halftime because of a sprained knee and didn't return. Young had his sprained left ankle wrapped in the third quarter and hobbled for the rest of the game.

"I must have sprained that ankle 55 times since high school," Young said.

Oates sprained his knee on the 49ers' final drive in the first half. He was limping toward the locker room doors when he saw the Niners' drive sputter at the Saints' 31. He hustled back onto the field in time to snap for Doug Brien's 48-yard field goal that gave the 49ers a 20-14 lead.

"I realized we were in field-goal position," Oates said. "Those were pretty important points at the time."

Ted Popson, who snaps on punts, had never snapped for field goals, so it was up to Oates. It was his last play of the game. He was thrown back after the snap, but still managed to get in the way of the charging Saints.

"I couldn't plant," Oates said, "and they knew it, too. They were coming right after me."

YOUNG'S INJURY did little to slow him down. For the third time this season he threw for four touchdowns and seems well on his way to leading the league in passing for a fourth straight season.

"He's incredible," said tight end Brent Jones, who was on the receiving end of two of Young's touchdown tosses. "He's on such a roll. What's his quarterback rating going to be, 120?"

Young completed 24 throws in 30 attempts, had his four touchdowns and no interceptions. Young came in with a rating of 105.3. The Cowboys' Troy Aikman was second in the league at 90.5.

The 49ers had a chance to blow the Saints out the Superdome doors in the first half. They seemed well on their way, up 10-0 and driving in the second quarter.

Young broke from the pocket and was speeding down the sideline when safety Sean Lumpkin popped the ball out of his grasp at the Saints' 12-yard line. Cornerback Jimmy Spencer then fell on it to delay the 49ers division winning satisfaction.

"That was stupid," Young said. "Dumb play."

THE SAINTS then came back. Quarterback Jim Everett hurled a 52-yard pass down to the 49ers' 36. The Saints jammed it home with a newly discovered running game. Rookie runner Mario Bates skipped in from 3 yards out virtually untouched.

The 49ers then threatened to blow them out later in the half. The offense flowed down the field like the mighty Mississippi to the Saints' 9. Running back Ricky Watters then took the handoff and dashed to the outside. Saints linebacker Sam Mills punched the ball from his grasp, and the fumble was picked up on the bounce by cornerback Tyrone Hughes.

Hughes, who happens to be the Saints' kick and punt returner, might set a record for overall return yardage in one season. The ball couldn't have been better hands as far as the

Saints were concerned. Hughes made a pair of cutbacks to shake Young and wide receiver Nate Singleton and went 86 yards for the touchdown.

THE 49ERS THEN put together a five-play, 38-yard drive in half a minute to position Brien for his 48-yard field goal, the longest of his career.

Leading 20-14, the 49ers needed a long, time-killing drive to put the Saints away at the start of the third quarter. They got it. The 49ers packed the C rations and marched 71 yards in 14 plays.

They had trouble once inside the Saints' 1-yard line. After two plays they still hadn't gotten in the end zone. They tried fullback William Floyd, who's fast becoming old reliable. Floyd tried the right side and fumbled. The ball took a lucky bounce into the hands of Jerry Rice.

The 49ers got another play and were called for jumping offside. Faced with third-and-goal from the 7, Young bought time and fired a touchdown pass to Jones.



TE Brent Jones caught two of the four touchdown passes

WORTH NOTING

INACTIVES: Not in uniform for the 49ers because of injury were DE Richard Dent, RB Marc Logan, G Ralph Tamm and LB Troy Wilson. Other inactives were TE Brett Carolan, QB Bill Musgrave and DE Mark Thomas.

JACKSON'S RETURN: DE Rickey Jackson, formerly of the Saints, said he expected to be booed by Saints fans. He was cheered instead. "I'm loved here," Jackson said after the game. "I own this town. Me, the Neville Brothers, Archie Manning and the mayor." Jackson had just one assisted tackle in the game.

BLACKOUT: For the first time since 1987 the Superdome wasn't sold out for a 49ers-Saints game. The only reason it happened in '87 was because it was a game played by replacements during a players strike.

WHAT AN OPENING ACT: Newly signed DE Tim Harris had a great game, despite having seen no prior playing time in 1994. Harris forced an incomplete pass on his first play of the game, and later got his first sack in more than two years. "I feel great," Harris said. "I feel like I'm 22 again." Harris, 30, was reportedly impressive in practice last week.



RB Ricky Watters had his second 100-yard rushing game this season

NEW ORLEANS NATIVE Nate Singleton iced the game with a 43-yard pass play that put the 49ers up 35-14. It was an impressive victory considering the 49ers fumbled four times, two of them by Watters (he recovered his own the second time).

QUOTABLE

"WE'RE LOOKING PAST THAT NOW. WE WANT MORE THAN THAT. WE WANT TO GET GREEDY NOW."

—DERRICK DEESE ON THE 49ERS WINNING THE NFC WEST

INJURIES: C Bart Oates reinjured his left knee, which was sprained a couple of weeks ago in practice, and is listed as questionable. Listed as probable are G Derrick Deese (abdomen), QB Steve Young (ankle), TE Brent Jones (shoulder) and WR John Taylor (knee).

EARLY WRAPUP: The 49ers clinched the NFC West championship on Monday, the earliest they've ever done that.

SAINTS RECORD: CB Tyrone Hughes' 86-yard fumble return was the longest in Saints history.

BELT BUCKLES GALORE: The Niners get their own, personal belt buckles for winning the NFC West. "This is the belt buckle game," one member of the team shouted as the Niners disappeared into the locker room after the victory over the Saints.

WINNING THE WEST: The 49ers didn't appear overly impressed with themselves after tucking their away their 11th divisional crown in 15 years. "No caps, no T-shirts are laying around," CB Deion Sanders said. "This is a stop on a long journey," S Merton Hanks said. "It's time to get out, refresh yourself and get to business."

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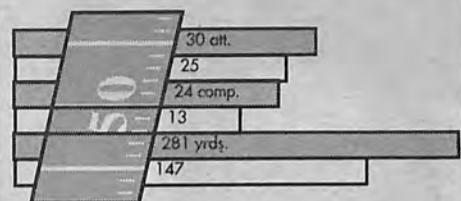
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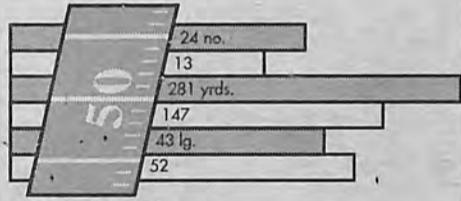
PASSING

	Att	Comp	Yds	Sks/Yds	TD	Lg	Int
49ers							
Young	30	24	281	2/11	4	43	0
Total	30	24	281	2/11	4	43	0
Saints							
Everett	25	13	147	1/8	0	52	2
Total	25	13	147	1/8	0	52	2



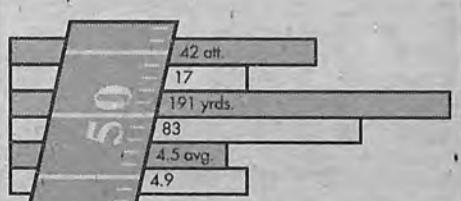
RECEIVING

	No	Yds	Lg	TD
49ers				
Rice	7	80	29	0
Jones	5	39	14	2
Taylor	4	35	17	1
Watters	2	37	29	0
Carter	2	25	19	0
Floyd	2	17	13	0
Singleton	1	43	43	1
Popson	1	5	5	0
Totals	24	281	43	4
Saints				
Haynes	4	66	52	0
Small	4	34	14	0
Walls	2	17	11	0
Bates	2	16	11	0
Brown	1	14	14	0
Totals	13	147	52	0



RUSHING

	Att	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
49ers					
Watters	26	105	4.0	19	0
Young	7	43	6.1	12	0
Floyd	8	40	5.0	10	0
Carter	1	3	3.0	3	0
Total	42	191	4.5	19	0
Saints					
Bates	14	69	4.9	13	1
Neal	2	11	5.5	7	0
Brown	1	3	3.0	3	0
Total	17	83	4.9	13	1



INTERCEPTIONS

	No	Yds	Lg	TD
49ers				
Sanders	1	43	43	0
McDonald	1	6	6	0
Total	2	49	43	0
Saints				
None	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

	No	Yds	Lg	TD
49ers				
Walker	2	26	16	0
Carter	1	45	45	0
Totals	3	71	45	0
Saints				
Hughes	5	96	28	0
Ned	1	19	19	0
Smith	1	0	0	0
Totals	7	115	28	0

PUNTING

	No	Yds	Avg	TB	In20	Lg
49ers						
Wilmsmeyer	1	38	38.0	0	1	38
Totals	1	38	38.0	0	1	38
Saints						
Barnhardt	3	112	37.3	0	1	42
Totals	3	112	37.3	0	1	42

PUNT RETURNS

	No	FC	Yds	Lg	TD
49ers					
Carter	2	1	11	11	0
Totals	2	1	11	11	0
Saints					
Hughes	1	0	-4	-4	0
Totals	1	0	-4	-4	0

TEAM STATISTICS

	49ers	Saints
Total First Downs	28	13
By Rushing	11	6
By Passing	3	0
By Penalty	0	0
Third Down Efficiency	11-15-73%	3-9-33%
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-0-0%	0-1-0%
Total Net Yards	461	222
Total Offensive Plays	74	43
Avg. Gain Per Offensive Play	6.2	5.2
Net Yards Rushing	191	83
Total Rushing Plays	42	17
Avg. Gain Per Rushing Play	4.5	4.9
Net Yards Passing	270	139
Times Thrown/Yards Lost	2/11	1/8
Gross Yards Passing	281	147
Pass Att.-Comp.-Int.	30-24-0	25-13-2
Avg. Gain Per Passing Play	8.4	5.3
Punts/Average	1-38.0	3-37.3
Had Blocked	0	0
Yards on Punt Returns	11	-4
Yards on Kickoff Returns	71	115
Yards on Interception Returns	49	0
Penalties/Yards	4/30	6/45
Fumbles/Lost	4-2	2-1
Touchdowns	4	2
Rushing	0	1
Passing	4	0
Returns	0	1
Extra points Made/Attempted	4/4	2/2
Kicking Made/Attempts	3/3	2/2
Passing Made/Attempts	1/1	0/0
Field Goals Made/Attempted	2/2	0/0
Time of Possession	38:29	21:31

SEASON STATS

TEAM STATISTICS

	49ers	Opponents
Total First Downs	264	219
By Rushing	92	67
By Passing	149	135
By Penalty	23	17
Third Down Made/Att.	75/149	66/163
Third Down Efficiency	50.3	40.5
Fourth Down Made/Att.	8/11	8/14
Fourth Down Efficiency	72.7	57.1
Total Net Yards	4415	3627
Avg. Per Game	367.9	302.3
Total Offensive Plays	770	745
Avg. Gain Per Offensive Play	5.7	4.9
Net Yards Rushing	1466	1089
Avg. Per Game	122.2	90.8
Total Rushing Plays	370	294
Net Yards Passing	2918	2538
Avg. Per Game	243.2	211.5
Sacks/Yards Lost	28/139	25/176
Gross Yards Passing	3065	2713
Att./Comp.	372/256	428/240
Pct. of Completions	68.8	56.1
Had Intercepted	8	16
Punts/Average	42/41.9	50/44.2
Penalties/Yards	74/662	75/615
Fumbles/Lost	16/9	16/7
Touchdowns	47	27
Rushing	15	12
Passing	27	13
Returns	5	2

SCORING

1994 NFL SCHEDULE

AMERICAN FOOTBALL CONFERENCE

NATIONAL FOOTBALL CONFERENCE

BENGALS		2-10
Sept. 4	Cleveland	20-28
Sept. 11	at San Diego	10-27
Sept. 18	New England	28-31
Sept. 25	at Houston	13-20
Oct. 2	Miami	7-23
Oct. 9	OPEN	
Oct. 16	at Pittsburgh	10-14
Oct. 23	at Cleveland	13-37
Oct. 30	Dallas	20-23
Nov. 6	at Seattle	20-17 O.T.
Nov. 13	Houston	34-31
Nov. 20	Indianapolis	13-17
Nov. 27	at Denver	13-15
Dec. 4	Pittsburgh	
Dec. 11	at N.Y. Giants	
Dec. 18	at Arizona	
Dec. 24	Philadelphia	

BROWNS		9-3
Sept. 4	at Cincinnati	28-20
Sept. 11	Pittsburgh	10-17
Sept. 18	Arizona	32-0
Sept. 25	at Indianapolis	21-14
Oct. 2	N.Y. Jets	27-7
Oct. 9	OPEN	
Oct. 16	at Houston	11-8
Oct. 23	Cincinnati	37-13
Oct. 30	at Denver	14-26
Nov. 6	New England	13-6
Nov. 13	at Philadelphia	26-7
Nov. 20	at Kansas City	13-20
Nov. 27	Houston	34-10
Dec. 4	N.Y. Giants	
Dec. 10	at Dallas	
Dec. 18	at Pittsburgh	
Dec. 24	Seattle	

OILERS		1-11
Sept. 4	at Indianapolis	21-45
Sept. 11	Dallas	17-20
Sept. 18	Buffalo	7-15
Sept. 25	Cincinnati	20-13
Oct. 2	at Pittsburgh	14-30
Oct. 9	OPEN	
Oct. 13	Cleveland	8-11
Oct. 24	at Philadelphia	6-21
Oct. 30	at L.A. Raiders	14-17
Nov. 6	Pittsburgh	9-12 O.T.
Nov. 13	at Cincinnati	31-34
Nov. 21	N.Y. Giants	10-13
Nov. 27	at Cleveland	10-34
Dec. 4	Arizona	
Dec. 11	Seattle	
Dec. 18	at Kansas City	
Dec. 24	N.Y. Jets	

STEELERS		9-3
Sept. 4	Dallas	9-26
Sept. 11	at Cleveland	17-10
Sept. 18	Indianapolis	31-21
Sept. 25	at Seattle	13-30
Oct. 2	Houston	30-14
Oct. 9	OPEN	
Oct. 16	Cincinnati	14-10
Oct. 23	at N.Y. Giants	10-6
Oct. 30	at Arizona	17-20
Nov. 6	at Houston	12-9 O.T.
Nov. 13	Buffalo	23-10
Nov. 20	Miami	16-13 O.T.
Nov. 27	at L.A. Raiders	21-3
Dec. 4	at Cincinnati	
Dec. 11	Philadelphia	
Dec. 18	Cleveland	
Dec. 24	at San Diego	

BILLS		6-6
Sept. 4	N.J. Jets	3-23
Sept. 11	at New England	38-35
Sept. 18	at Houston	15-7
Sept. 25	Denver	27-20
Oct. 2	at Chicago	13-20
Oct. 9	Miami	21-11
Oct. 16	Indianapolis	17-27
Oct. 23	OPEN	
Oct. 30	Kansas City	44-10
Nov. 6	at N.Y. Jets	14-22
Nov. 14	at Pittsburgh	10-23
Nov. 20	Green Bay	29-20
Nov. 24	at Detroit	21-35
Dec. 4	at Miami	
Dec. 11	Minnesota	
Dec. 18	New England	
Dec. 24	at Indianapolis	

BRONCOS		6-6
Sept. 4	San Diego	34-37
Sept. 11	at N.Y. Jets	22-25 O.T.
Sept. 18	L.A. Raiders	16-48
Sept. 25	at Buffalo	20-27
Oct. 2	OPEN	
Oct. 9	at Seattle	16-9
Oct. 17	Kansas City	28-31
Oct. 23	at San Diego	20-15
Oct. 30	Cleveland	26-14
Nov. 6	at L.A. Rams	21-27
Nov. 13	Seattle	17-10
Nov. 20	Atlanta	32-28
Nov. 27	Cincinnati	15-13
Dec. 4	at Kansas City	
Dec. 11	at L.A. Raiders	
Dec. 18	San Francisco	
Dec. 24	New Orleans	

COLTS		5-7
Sept. 4	Houston	45-21
Sept. 11	at Tampa Bay	10-24
Sept. 18	at Pittsburgh	21-31
Sept. 25	Cleveland	14-21
Oct. 2	Seattle	17-15
Oct. 9	at N.Y. Jets	6-16
Oct. 16	at Buffalo	27-17
Oct. 23	Washington	27-41
Oct. 30	N.Y. Jets	28-25
Nov. 6	at Miami	21-22
Nov. 13	OPEN	
Nov. 20	at Cincinnati	17-13
Nov. 27	New England	10-12
Dec. 4	at Seattle	
Dec. 11	at New England	
Dec. 18	Miami	
Dec. 24	Buffalo	

CHIEFS		7-5
Sept. 4	at New Orleans	30-17
Sept. 11	San Francisco	24-17
Sept. 18	at Atlanta	30-10
Sept. 25	L.A. Rams	0-16
Oct. 2	OPEN	
Oct. 9	at San Diego	6-20
Oct. 17	at Denver	31-28
Oct. 23	Seattle	38-23
Oct. 30	at Buffalo	10-44
Nov. 6	L.A. Raiders	13-3
Nov. 13	San Diego	13-14
Nov. 20	Cleveland	20-13
Nov. 27	at Seattle	9-10
Dec. 4	Denver	
Dec. 12	at Miami	
Dec. 18	Houston	
Dec. 24	at L.A. Raiders	

DOLPHINS		8-4
Sept. 4	New England	39-35
Sept. 11	Green Bay	24-14
Sept. 18	N.Y. Jets	28-14
Sept. 25	at Minnesota	35-38
Oct. 2	Cincinnati	23-7
Oct. 9	at Buffalo	11-21
Oct. 16	L.A. Raiders	20-17 O.T.
Oct. 23	OPEN	
Oct. 30	at New England	23-3
Nov. 6	Indiana	22-21
Nov. 13	Chicago	14-17
Nov. 20	at Pittsburgh	18-16 O.T.
Nov. 27	at N.Y. Jets	28-24
Dec. 4	Buffalo	
Dec. 12	Kansas City	
Dec. 18	at Indianapolis	
Dec. 24	Detroit	

RAIDERS		6-6
Sept. 5	at San Francisco	14-14
Sept. 11	Seattle	9-38
Sept. 18	at Denver	48-16
Sept. 25	San Diego	24-26
Oct. 2	OPEN	
Oct. 9	at New England	21-17
Oct. 16	at Miami	17-20 O.T.
Oct. 23	Atlanta	30-17
Oct. 30	Houston	17-14
Nov. 6	at Kansas City	3-13
Nov. 13	at L.A. Rams	20-17
Nov. 20	New Orleans	24-19
Nov. 27	Pittsburgh	3-21
Dec. 4	at San Diego	
Dec. 11	Denver	
Dec. 18	at Seattle	
Dec. 24	Kansas City	

JETS		**6-6**

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PREVIEW

49ERS

ROSTER AND DEPTH CHART

4	Brien, Doug	K
8	Young, Steve	QB
10	Wilmsmeyer, Klaus	P
14	Musgrave, Bill	QB
18	Grbac, Elvis	QB
20	Loville, Derek	RB
21	Sanders, Deion	CB
22	Drakeford, Tyronne	CB
25	Davis, Eric	CB
27	Walker, Adam	RB
28	Hall, Dana	S
32	Watters, Ricky	RB
33	Dodge, Dedrick	S
35	Carter, Dexter	RB
36	Hanks, Merton	S
40	Floyd, William	FB
41	Cook, Toi	CB
43	Logan, Marc	FB
48	McDonald, Tim	S
50	Plummer, Gary	LB
51	Norton, Ken	LB
53	Peterson, Anthony	S
54	Woodall, Lee	LB
55	Mitchell, Kevin	LB
57	Jackson, Rickey	DE
58	Kelly, Todd	G-C
61	Sapolu, Jesse	S
63	Deese, Derrick	G-C
64	Tamm, Ralph	T
65	Boatswain, Harry	G-C
68	Oates, Bart	C
67	Dalman, Chris	G-C
69	Milstead, Rod	G
71	Mann, Charles	DE
72	Thomas, Mark	DE
74	Wallace, Steve	T
75	Pollack, Frank	T
79	Barton, Harris	T
80	Rice, Jerry	WR
81	Owens, Darrick	WR
82	Taylor, John	WR
84	Jones, Brent	TE
85	Popson, Ted	TE
86	Carolan, Brett	TE
88	Singleton, Nate	WR
89	McCaffrey, Ed	WR
92	Wilson, Troy	DE
94	Stubblefield, Dana	DT
95	Dent, Richard	DE
96	Brown, Dennis	DE
97	Young, Bryant	DT
98	Goss, Antonio	LB
99	Tim Harris	DE

OFFENSE

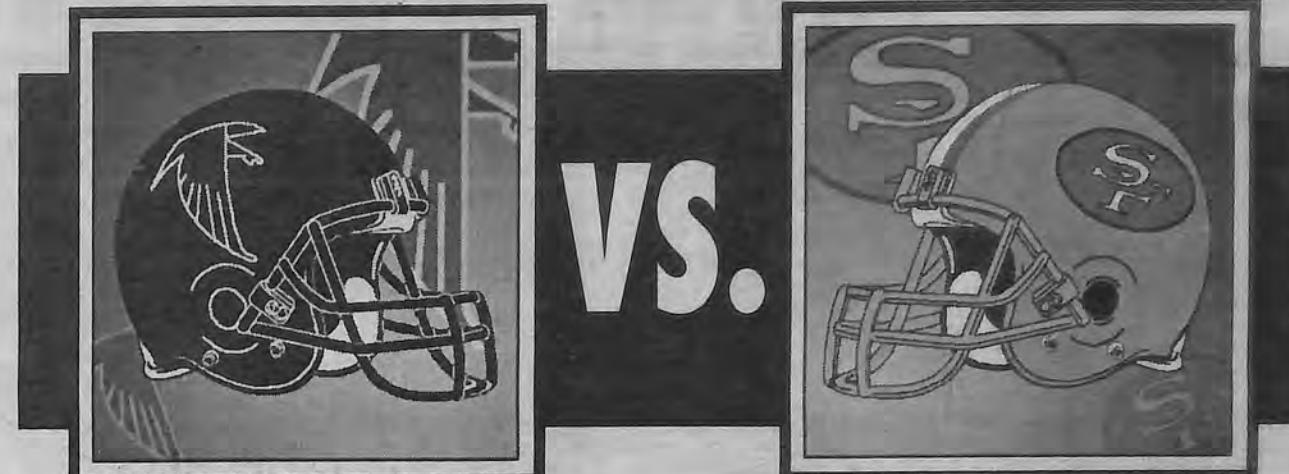
WR-82-Taylor, 88-Singleton
 LT-74-Wallace, 75-Pollack
 LG-61-Sapolu, 67-Dalman
 C-66-Oates, 67-Dalman
 RG-63-Deese, 68-Milstead
 RT-75-Pollack, 65-Boatswain
 TE-84-Jones, 85-Popson
 WR-80-Rice, 83-McCaffrey
 QB-8-Young, 18-Grbac
 RB-32-Watters, 35-Carter
 FB-40-Floyd, 43-Logan

DEFENSE

LE-96-Brown, 71-Mann
 LT-87-Young, 72-Thomas
 RT-94-Stubblefield, 72-Thomas
 RE-57-Jackson, 92-Wilson
 LLB-54-Woodall, 98-Goss
 MLB-50-Plummer, 55-Mitchell
 RLB-51-Norton, 53-Peterson
 LCB-25-Davis, 41-Cook
 RCB-21-Sanders, 41-Cook
 SS-46-McDonald, 68-Hall
 FS-36-Hanks, 68-Hall

SPECIAL TEAMS

P-4-Brien, 10-Wilmsmeyer
 K-10-Wilmsmeyer
 H-10-Wilmsmeyer, 18-Grbac
 KC-66-Oates
 PC-66-Oates
 PR-35-D.Carter, 88-Singleton
 KR-88-Singleton, 35-Carter

**FALCONS****49ERS**

Just when fans were about to forget the fisticuffs between supposed friends Deion Sanders and Andre Rison, along come the Falcons. That's about the only aspect of this matchup that will have any drama.

The 49ers are likely to go into the game with the NFC West wrapped up tighter than a Christmas package. The Niners are still in engaged in a race with the Cowboys for homefield advantage throughout the playoffs. For that reason, victories are precious.

THEY ALSO ARE essential for the Falcons, who have an outside shot at the playoffs. But the media focus will be on Rison, the Falcons' wide receiver, and his former teammate, Sanders. The battle has now taken a soap opera-like dimension.

Before the last game Rison said he thought the Falcons were a better team now that Sanders had left. Sanders was stung by the comments, saying he didn't understand them and that he considered Rison a friend. He also said he'd love to have the rest of the players get off the field so he could go one-on-one with Rison.

RISON CALLED the impending battle the "greatest matchup in history." When Rison retires from football he has a potential career in boxing promotion. And that's exactly what the "friends" did—box. A fight erupted between them in the second quarter.

Sanders was trying to jam

Rison at the line of scrimmage and caught him around the throat. Rison retaliated and a slugfest ensued. Flags flew and Sanders was hit with a 15-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. Most of the 49ers thought Sanders would be ejected.

RICKIE JACKSON did his best to distract officials while the Georgia Dome replayed the brawl on its big screen. Officials started cracking down on fighting, and many players have been tossed since that game for fighting. The Niners' own Gary Plummer was ejected a few weeks later for mixing it up with the Buccaneers' Tyji Armstrong.

Sanders got the last shot on the Falcons when he intercepted a Jeff George pass and sped down the sideline in front of the Falcons' bench on his way to the end zone.



CB Deion Sanders



WR Andre Rison

WHEN THE FALCONS HAVE THE BALL

The 49ers aren't likely to change what they did in the previous game against the Falcons, which was completely dismantle them. The 49ers blitzed just once in the game, but sacked Falcons quarterbacks six times and induced six turnovers. They had had just four sacks and five turnovers in the first six games. The Niners haven't experienced a defensive effort that strong since. They freed the defensive linemen to go after the quarterback. "Some of their guys (looked like they) were shot out of cannon," Falcons coach June Jones said. "It was unbelievable. Dana Stubblefield almost took the handoff a couple of times." The 49ers figure to be slowed by the soft Candlestick Park sod this time. And the Falcons are likely to run more draw plays to slow down the Niners' front four. Now that Jack Pardee has been fired by the Oilers, the Falcons are the only team left in the league running the pure run-and-shoot offense. The 49ers countered their scheme with a six-defensive back alignment. Look for them to do that in this game.

WHEN THE 49ERS HAVE THE BALL

Steve Young was nearly flawless in the first Falcons game when he completed 15 of 16 passes for 143 yards and four TDs before being lifted five minutes into the third quarter. The offense was helped enormously by the defense, which set them up in good field position all day with turnovers. The Falcons would seem to have a good defensive plan against the 49ers with their five-defensive back alignment. But the defense was never a factor because of the many turnovers. In a tight game the 49ers might have success running the ball. The Falcons' defense relies on speed and thus isn't very big. The Niners were successful running right at the Falcons' defense in the first game. "The best way to counter speed is with power," is how offensive tackle Frank Pollack put it. The Falcons usually use just two linebackers and five defensive backs.

GAME 13

QUOTABLE

“IT WAS BEAUTIFUL. IT WAS ALMOST LIKE SOMEBODY WROTE IT IN A PLAY OR SOMETHING. NOT ONLY DID HE MAKE THE INTERCEPTION AND RUN IT BACK, BUT IT WAS ON THEIR SIDELINE. EVERYTHING WAS SO PERFECT IT WAS CRAZY.”

—RB RICKY WATTERS ON DEION SANDERS' 93-YARD INTERCEPTION RETURN FOR A TOUCHDOWN AGAINST THE FALCONS ON OCT. 16

FACTS & FIGURES

DATE: Sunday, Dec. 4
SITE: Candlestick Park
TIME: 10 a.m. (PST)
SURFACE: Grass

SERIES: 49ers, 33-21-1
TELEVISION: Fox (Channel 2 in Bay Area)
LAST TIME: 49ers 42, Falcons 3, Oct. 16 in Atlanta

WORTH NOTING

RISON LATE: New Falcons head coach June Jones has shown little patience with temperamental WR Andre Rison. Jones benched Rison for the entire game because of his compulsive tardiness. Rison supposedly has been late for more than 50 team meetings and has been fined more than \$100,000. He was suspended for the Broncos game on Nov. 20, which the Falcons lost by four points. Rison was on time for the team's Monday meetings the next day.

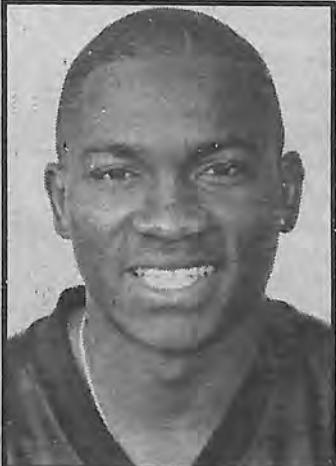
ODDS & ENDS: The 49ers have taken four of the last five from the Falcons at Candlestick Park... TE Brent Jones has 24 receptions in his career against the Falcons, 20 of which have been for touchdowns or first

downs ... The last time these teams met the 49ers used injured DE Richard Dent as a waterboy. Dent went out to the defensive huddle during timeouts with a towel and water bottle ... S Dana Hall had the best day of his career against the Falcons in the last game with two interceptions and a four tackles. Unfortunately, he had his wedding ring stolen out of the locker room afterward ... CB Deion Sanders had a false tooth knocked out in the last game. Most thought it occurred during the fight with WR Andre Rison, but it actually happened while Sanders was chewing gum before the game ... Of the 10 biggest routs in 49ers history, three have come against the Falcons, including last game's 42-3 shellacking.

KEY PLAYERS

49ERS

CB Deion Sanders will once again be the featured player as he goes against WR Andre Rison for the second time. Sanders probably won't play as much bump-and-run because of his dislocated finger. Sanders has had to play off receivers recently, which isn't his preference ... DT Dana Stubblefield completely disrupted the Falcons' blocking the last time and also had two sacks as he overwhelmed G Dave Richards all day ... If QB Steve Young, who threw just one incomplete pass in the last game, continues to be as accurate, the Falcons don't have a chance ... RB Ricky Watters should see plenty of action against the Falcons, as the Niners should take advantage of a two-linebacker defense.



WR Terance Mathis



DE Chris Doleman



QB Jeff George

FALCONS

DE Chris Doleman and former 49ers DT Pierce Holt will need to put pressure on QB Steve Young if the Falcons hope to stop the Niners' offense. Young wasn't sacked in the last game and was hit only once all day, and that was by Holt ... WR Terance Mathis has been the surprise for the Falcons. He's playing his best football with 80 receptions and is hard to cover from his slot position ... QB Jeff George will have to do a much better job reading the 49ers' secondary. He threw for 177 yards in the first Niners game but was yanked after being intercepted twice ... FB Craig Heyward, after failing with the Saints and the Bears, has succeeded so far for the Falcons. He leads the club in rushing with 520 yards on 116 carries.

FALCONS

ROSTER AND DEPTH CHART

1	Jeff George	QB
2	Clarence Verdin	WR
3	Bobby Hebert	QB
4	Scott Tyner	K
5	Harold Alexander	P
7	Perry Klein	QB
8	Norm Johnson	K
22	Alton Montgomery	LB
25	Scott Case	S
26	Anthony Phillips	CB
27	Vinnie Clark	CB
32	Jamal Anderson	FB
33	Erric Pegram	RB
34	Craig Heyward	RB
36	Kevin Ross	S
37	Elbert Shelley	CB
39	Eric Jack	CB
41	Brett Maxie	S
44	D.J. Johnson	CB
45	Darnell Walker	LB
46	Charles Washington	LB
48	Darryl Ford	LB
50	Ron George	LB
51	Jim Ritcher	G
52	Ken Tippins	LB
53	Dwayne Gordon	DE
56	Chris Doleman	LB
57	Clay Matthews	G/C
58	Jessie Tuggle	G/T
61	Robbie Tobeck	NT
62	Dave Richards	T
65	Roman Fortin	DT
66	Lincoln Kennedy	C/E
67	Moe Gardner	OT
68	Mei Ages	WR
70	Bob Whitfield	WR
71	Bill Goldberg	WR
72	Mike Zandofsky	WR
75	Irv Eatman	WR
78	Mike Kenn	WR
80	Andre Rison	WR
81	Terance Mathis	WR
82	Leonard Harris	WR
83	Ricky Sanders	WR
84	Darryl Spencer	WR
85	David Mims	WR
86	Mitch Lyons	TE
87	Bert Emanuel	WR
88	Harper Le Bel	TE
90	Chuck Smith	DE
92	Lester Archambeau	DE
95	Pierce Holt	DT
97	Jumpy Geathers	DT

OFFENSE

WR-80-RISON, 82-Harris
WR-81-MATHIS, 84-Spencer
LT-78-KENNEDY, 66-Kennedy
LG-62-RICHARDS, 66-Kennedy
C-FORTIN, 81-Tobeck
RG-72-ZANDOFSKY, 51-Ritcher
RT-70-WHITFIELD, 66-Kennedy
WR-83-SANDERS, 85-Mims
WR-87-EMANUEL, 2-Verdin
QB-1-GEORGE, 3-Herbert
RB-34-HEYWARD, 33-Pegram

DEFENSE

LE-90-SMITH, 92-Archambeau
LT-85-HOLT, 68-Agee
RT-87-GARDNER, 97-Geathers
RE-92-ARCHAMBEAU, 58-Doleman
SLB-58-TUGGLE, 53-Gordon
WLB-57-MATTHEWS, 52-Tippins
FALCON-50-GEORGE, 48-Ford
LCB-27-CLARK, 39-Jack
RCB-44-JOHNSON, 45-Walker
FS-36-ROSS, 41-Maxie
STAR-46-WASHINGTON, 25-Case

SPECIAL TEAMS

P-5-ALEXANDER, 4-Tyner
K-9-JOHNSON, 4-Tyner
KO-4-TYNER, 9-Johnson
PR-2-VERDIN, 81-Mathis
KOR-2-VERDIN, 34-Heyward
LS-88-LE BEL, 65-Fortin
H-5-ALEXANDER, 87-Emanuel

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This Week's Game		8-7 106-62	8-7 100-68	8-7 108-60
Last Week's Record	Season Record	Minnesota	Minnesota	Minnesota
Chicago at Minnesota	Minnesota	Minnesota	Minnesota	Minnesota
Arizona at Houston	Arizona	Arizona	Arizona	Arizona
Atlanta at San Francisco	San Francisco	San Francisco	San Francisco	San Francisco
Dallas at Philadelphia	Dallas	Dallas	Dallas	Dallas
Denver at Kansas City	Kansas City	Kansas City	Kansas City	Kansas City
Green Bay at Detroit	Green Bay	Green Bay	Green Bay	Detroit
Indianapolis at Seattle	Seattle	Indianapolis	Seattle	Seattle
New Orleans at L.A. Rams	L.A. Rams	New Orleans	L.A. Rams	L.A. Rams
N.Y. Giants at Cleveland	Cleveland	Cleveland	Cleveland	Cleveland
N.Y. Jets at New England	New England	New England	New England	New England
Pittsburgh at Cincinnati	Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh
Washington at Tampa Bay	Washington	Washington	Washington	Tampa Bay
Buffalo at Miami	Miami	Miami	Miami	Miami
L.A. Raiders at San Diego	San Diego	San Diego	San Diego	L.A. Raiders

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This Week's Game		8-7 105-63	9-6 101-67	8-7 96-72	9-6 97-71
Last Week's Record	Season Record				
Chicago at Minnesota	Chicago	Minnesota	Minnesota	Minnesota	Minnesota
Arizona at Houston	Houston	Arizona	Arizona	Arizona	Arizona
Atlanta at San Francisco	San Francisco	San Francisco	San Francisco	San Francisco	San Francisco
Dallas at Philadelphia	Dallas	Philadelphia	Dallas	Dallas	Dallas
Denver at Kansas City	Denver	Kansas City	Kansas City	Kansas City	Kansas City
Green Bay at Detroit	Green Bay	Green Bay	Detroit	Green Bay	Green Bay
Indianapolis at Seattle	Indianapolis	Indianapolis	Seattle	Indianapolis	Indianapolis
New Orleans at L.A. Rams	L.A. Rams	L.A. Rams	L.A. Rams	L.A. Rams	L.A. Rams
N.Y. Giants at Cleveland	Cleveland	Cleveland	Cleveland	Cleveland	Cleveland
N.Y. Jets at New England	N.Y. Jets	New England	New England	N.Y. Jets	N.Y. Jets
Pittsburgh at Cincinnati	Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh
Washington at Tampa Bay	Tampa Bay	Tampa Bay	Washington	Washington	Washington
Buffalo at Miami	Miami	Miami	Miami	Miami	Miami
L.A. Raiders at San Diego	L.A. Raiders	San Diego	San Diego	San Diego	San Diego

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